

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-05 L-02

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AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

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AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USMISSION OECD PARIS

AMCONSUL BELFAST

AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

AMCONSUL LIVERPOOL

C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 13666

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, UK

SUBJECT: WILSON ANNOUNCES CABINET ADDITION AND
MINISTERIAL SHUFFLE

REF: LONDON 13591

SUMMARY: PRIME MINISTER WILSON OCTOBER 18 ANNOUNCED NEW
ADDITION TO HIS CABINET, BRINGING TOTAL MEMBERSHIP TO
22, FILLED TWO MINISTERIAL VACANCIES (ARMY AND AGRICUL-
TURE), SHUFFLED OTHER JUNIOR MINISTERS AND BROUGHT FIVE
BACKBENCHERS INTO GOVERNMENT RANKS. PRINCIPAL PURPOSE
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OF THESE ACTIONS WAS TO PREPARE FOR NATIONALIZATION OF

DEVELOPMENT LAND AND DEVOLUTION IN SCOTLAND AND WALES'
END SUMMARY

1. PRIME MINISTER APPOINTED JOHN SILKIN, MINISTER OF PLANNING AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT, TO CABINET. SILKIN WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR PREPARATION OF LEGISLATION NATIONALIZING DEVELOPMENT LAND. THIS ANNOUNCE REAFFIRMS HIGH PRIORITY WILSON GOVERNMENT ATTACHES TO FULFILLMENT OF THIS PART OF LABOR'S PROGRAM. AS SILKIN APPOINTMENT INCREASES NUMBER OF CABINET OFFICERS BEYOND STATUTORY LIMIT, HE WILL NOT DRAW MINISTER'S SALARY.

2. AT CABINET LEVEL WILSON ALSO RECONFIRMED ROBERT MELLISH AS CHIEF WHIP AND DESIGNATED EDWARD SHORT, LORD PRESIDENT OF COUNCIL AND LEADER OF COMMONS, TO OVERSEE PREPARATION OF DEVOLUTION LEGISLATION. MELLISH CONFIRMATION WAS SOMETHING OF SURPRISE, AS HE HAD MADE NO SECRET OF HIS DESIRE TO LEAVE WHIP'S OFFICE AND ASSUME HOUSING PORTFOLIO. SHORT'S NEW RESPONSIBILITIES REINFORCE GOVERNMENT INTENT TO IMPLEMENT DEVOLUTION POLICY PROMPTLY. IT WAS FORESHADOWED BY OCTOBER 17 DECLARATION BY LABOR PARTY'S SCOTTISH MPS CALLING FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF SCOTTISH ASSEMBLY WITHIN TWO YEARS. SHORT WILL BE ASSISTED BY: GERALD FOWLER, MINISTER OF STATE' PRIVY COUNCIL; HARRY EWING, PARLIAMENTARY UNDERSECRETARY' SCOTTISH OFFICE; AND EDWARD ROWLANDS, PARLIAMENTARY UNDERSECRETARY, WELSH OFFICE.

3. IN ADDITION, WILSON ANNOUNCED 16 OTHER SUB-CABINET LEVEL CHANGES AND APPOINTMENTS WHICH, INTER ALIA, FILLED VACANCIES LEFT BY RECENT RESIGNATIONS OF UNDERSECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR THE ARMY LORD BRAYLEY AND MINISTER OF STATE FOR AGRICULTURE NORMAN BUCHAN (REFTEL), AND BROUGHT FIVE FORMER BACKBENCHERS INTO GOVERNMENT. RON BROWN, BROTHER OF LORD GEORGE-BROWN, WAS NAMED TO THE ARMY POSITION. BROWN IS POLITICALLY AS WELL AS PERSONALLY CLOSE TO HIS BROTHER AND IS WELL DISPOSED TOWARD THE US. EDWARD S. BISHOP REPLACES BUCHAN' COMPLETE REPORT OF CHANGES FOLLOWS BY AIRGRAM.

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4. EMBASSY DOES NOT BELIEVE THESE ACTIONS REPRESENT SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN WILSON GOVERNMENT'S MAKE-UP OR OUTLOOK. SOME PRESS COMMENTARY, HOWEVER, HAS SUGGESTED SILKIN'S ADDITION TO CABINET INDICATES WILSON HAS TILTED AGAINST EEC. WHILE SILKIN IS CONFIRMED ANTI-MARKETEER AND HIS ENTRY WILL STRENGTHEN HAND OF ANTI-EEC BLOC IN CABINET, BALANCE OF POWER STILL RESIDES WITH THE UNCOMMITTED (E.G. CALLAGHAN, HEALEY, CROSLAND AND, OF

COURSE, WILSON HIMSELF). ACCORDINGLY, WE DO NOT BELIEVE TOO MUCH SHOULD BE INFERRED FROM SILKIN APPOINTMENT IN TERMS OF EC ISSUE. WE ALSO UNDERSTAND FROM LABOR PARTY SOURCES THAT WILSON IS PLANNING MAJOR CABINET SHAKE-UP NEXT SPRING, DESIGNED PRIMARILY TO RETIRE SOME OF OLDER MEMBERS.

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